

Description

[Apparatus for stacking casino chips or gaming tokens]

BACKGROUND OF INVENTION

[0001] The present invention relates generally to an apparatus for stacking casino chips, gaming tokens or the like.

[0002] Almost every Western movie picture made in Hollywood contains a depiction of a "saloon scene" circa the late 1800s where ranch hands and professional gamblers are seen playing poker, tossing gold coins, poker chips and paper money into the "pot" in the center of the table.

[0003] Fast forward to today's version of card clubs and casinos and the scene is very similar. In today's poker rooms, the card club or casino provides a dealer to deal the cards. In addition to dealing the cards, it is the dealer's responsibility to collect the players bets, which in almost all instances is comprised of poker chips. The dealer must also "pay" or distribute to the winning player or players the collected poker chips. Furthermore, the dealer is also

charged with taking a "rake" on every hand dealt. The rake is a fee the card club or casino earns for hosting the poker game and typically ranges from \$1.00 to \$5.00 per hand. The faster the dealer deals the cards, collects the bets and pays the players, the more money the card club or casino can make per table.

[0004] Since speed and the number of hands dealt per hour is important in the profitability of the card club, there have been several advancements to assist card dealers such as automated card shuffling devices. To date however, no one has addressed the speed at which the dealer collects chips and pays the winning player.

SUMMARY OF INVENTION

[0005] The device described in this patent application addresses the need to quickly stack poker chips, gaming chips or casino tokens, greatly assisting casino dealers in reducing the time it takes to collect chips and pay winning players. The device has broad uses in the gaming industry including assisting other casino game dealers that have a need to stack chips, for example, a Roulette dealer. Additionally, there is a considerable need in the "back of the house" operations such as in the "casino cage" and the "counting rooms" where gaming chips or tokens are

counted after being taken off of gaming tables as "tips" or "fees" and ultimately put back into circulation for use by the gaming public.

[0006] In a preferred embodiment of the present invention, an apparatus for stacking chips includes a receptacle, a diverter and a plurality of tubes. In operation, the apparatus would be placed on a flat surface such as gaming table, on which stacks of chips/tokens are to be formed. A casino dealer would place poker chips, gaming chips or casino tokens in the top of the receptacle. Each chip/token would fall into one of the tubes forming a stack of chips/tokens in each tube that rests on the surface. The diverter is located within the receptacle and assists to divert the chips/tokens into the tubes. The dealer would then lift the device vertically straight up and stacks of chips would remain.

[0007] a first alternate embodiment, the apparatus includes a base on which the chips may be stacked. The base may be adapted to be connected to the apparatus, allowing the apparatus to be used for transporting the stacked chips.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

[0008] Figure 1 is a top perspective view of a chip stacking apparatus according to a preferred embodiment;

- [0009] Figure 2 is a bottom perspective view of a chip stacking apparatus according to preferred embodiment;
- [0010] Figures 3a–c are top, perspective and side views, respectively, of a chip/token according to a preferred embodiment;
- [0011] Figure 4 is a block diagram illustrating a top view of the chip stacking apparatus according to a preferred embodiment;
- [0012] Figure 5 is a block diagram illustrating a bottom view of the chip stacking apparatus according to a preferred embodiment;
- [0013] Figure 6 is a block diagram illustrating a side view of the chip stacking apparatus receiving chips according to a preferred embodiment;
- [0014] Figure 7 is a block diagram illustrating a perspective view of a bottom portion of a chip stacking apparatus according to a preferred embodiment; and
- [0015] Figures 8a–b are block diagrams illustrating the engagement of a chip stacking apparatus with a bottom portion according to a preferred embodiment.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

- [0016] The device described in this patent application addresses the need to quickly stack poker chips, gaming chips or

casino tokens, greatly assisting casino dealers in reducing the time it takes to collect chips and pay winning players. The device has broad uses in the gaming industry including assisting other casino game dealers that have a need to stack chips, for example, a Roulette dealer. Additionally, there is a considerable need in the "back of the house" operations such as in the "casino cage" and the "counting rooms" where gaming chips or tokens are counted after being taken off of gaming tables as "tips" or "fees" and ultimately put back into circulation for use by the gaming public.

[0017] In a preferred embodiment of the present invention, an apparatus for stacking chips includes a receptacle, a diverter and a plurality of tubes. In operation, the apparatus would be placed on a flat surface such as gaming table, on which stacks of chips/tokens are to be formed. A casino dealer would place poker chips, gaming chips or casino tokens in the top of the receptacle. Each chip/token would fall into one of the tubes forming a stack of chips/tokens in each tube that rests on the surface. The diverter is located within the receptacle and assists to divert the chips/tokens into the tubes. The dealer would then lift the device vertically straight up and stacks of

chips would remain.

[0018] A preferred embodiment of the present invention is illustrated in Figs. 1, 2, 4 and 5. A chip stacking apparatus 10 includes a plurality of tubes 20, a receptacle 30 having a bottom 40, and a diverter 50. The chip stacking apparatus 10 is preferably made of a durable plastics, but may be made out of other substances including wood, metal or glass. As illustrated the chip stacking apparatus 20 includes four tubes 20, one diverter 50 and one receptacle 30, but it will be appreciated by those having ordinary skill in the art that a chip stacking apparatus may be designed with other numbers of tubes, diverters and receptacles within the scope and spirit of the present invention. As illustrated, the receptacle is rectangular shaped, the tubes are cylindrically shaped and the diverter is conically shaped, but it should be understood by those skilled in the art that other shapes are contemplated within the scope of this invention.

[0019] In the preferred embodiment, each tube 20 is cylindrically shaped and approximately 6 inches long. Alternatively, the tubes may be other lengths, but preferably are adapted to accommodate a stack of 40 chips. The bottom of each tube 20 is adapted to rest on a flat surface such

as a casino gaming table. The diameter of each tube 20 is greater than the diameter of the chips to be stacked, and small enough to ensure a single stack of chips is formed therein. In the preferred embodiment, as illustrated in Fig. 2, the diameter at the top of each tube 20 is 45 millimeters and the diameter at the bottom is 42 millimeters. In an alternate embodiment, each tube has a uniform diameter. The tubes are preferably disposed adjacent to one another, but may be separated, such as with a divider 60, as dictated by design considerations.

[0020] The bottom 40 of the receptacle 30 includes a plurality of holes. Each hole corresponds to the top of one of the tubes 20. The receptacle 30 includes at least one side wall adjacent to the holes. The diverter 50 is preferably a circular protrusion located in the center of the receptacle bottom 40. The holes, the diverter 50 and the side wall of the receptacle 30 are arranged to minimize the surface area of the bottom 40 so that chips will be directed into the tubes. In alternative embodiments, the surface area of the bottom 40 may be reduced by incorporating additional diverters along the side wall and between the holes.

[0021] Operation of the chip stacking apparatus 10 is illustrated in Fig. 6. The chip stacking apparatus 10 is placed on a

flat surface 80 such as a casino gaming table. A plurality of chips 70 are dropped into the receptacle 30 by hand and the chips fall into the receptacle and into the tubes 20, forming stacks of chips 90a and 90b on the surface 80. If one or more chips 70 remain in the receptacle 30, the chip stacking apparatus may be given a small shake by hand in a horizontal direction 100 to promote the remaining chips 70 to fall into one of the tubes 20. The chip stacking apparatus 10 may then be lifted away from the surface to expose the stacked chips 90b and 90a. As illustrated in chip stack 90a, the chips may be stacked in a non-uniform manner within the tube 20. Moving the chip stacking apparatus 10 in a horizontal direction 100 will also aid in adjusting the chips to form a uniform stack as illustrated in chip stack 90b.

[0022] Referring to Figs. 3a–c, a preferred chip is illustrated. As used herein, the term chip refers to poker chips, casino chips, gaming tokens, and other similar articles. The chip 70 is preferably a standard poker chip that is round with a diameter of approximately 39 millimeters. The chip stacking apparatus may be adapted to accommodate other chips shapes and sizes.

[0023] A base portion 110 is illustrated in Fig. 7. The base portion

110 includes a bottom surface 130 on which chips are stacked, an open end 120 for receiving tubes 20 of a chip stacking apparatus 10 and side walls 140. As illustrated in Figs 8a–b, The chip stacking apparatus 10 may be inserted into the base portion 110. Preferably, the base portion is shaped to correspond to the outer surface of the receptacle 30. When the base portion 110 is used along with the chip stacking apparatus 10, the stacked chips may be transported therein. In alternative embodiments, the bottom surface 130 may be removable to allow access to the stacked chips.

[0024] Having just described a preferred embodiment of the present invention, it should be apparent to those skilled in the art that certain advantages of the within described system have been achieved. It should also be appreciated that various modifications, adaptations, and alternative embodiments thereof may be made within the scope and spirit of the present invention. For example, it is contemplated that the chips may be placed within the receptacle by machine, hand or in another manner. It is also contemplated that a plurality of chip stacking apparatuses may be used together.

[0025] The scope of the present invention is defined by the fol–

lowing claims.